Midweek Lent 4

March 25, 2020

The Crucifixion of Peter

John 21:15-19

The crucifixion of Peter

The Gospel reading for tonight comes on the heel of Jesus, restoring Peter to his place as an Apostle after Peter's denial of Christ. On the heels of Jesus asking Peter three times, do you love me one for each time Peter denied Christ. Jesus foretells of Peter's crucifixion in verses 18 and 19 of John Chapter 21. **18**Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted, but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." **19**Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" Tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down because he stated he was not worthy of being killed in the same manner as his Lord and Savior.

Let's take a look at what we know about this beloved Apostle before his martyrdom for his faith. We know that he was the first disciple to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. We also know that because of his confession in Matthew 16, Jesus made Peter the Ecclesiastical Supervisor of all the other Apostles and the First Century Church. Hence the reason for his many travels, mission trips, and other business he conducted on behalf of the kingdom of Christ. There are some other things you may not know quite as well about Peter. For instance, he was married for over 50 years to Perpetua. He was a business owner of a moderately successful fishing business. The Zebedee family were in partnership and owners of their boats as well. He was born on the banks of the Jordan River near where it empties into the Sea of Galilee in the town of Bethsaida, which means fisherman's haven. Bethsaida was populated by a tremendous gentle or pagans, as well as Palestinian Jews. He was fluent in both Greek and Aramaic, which was the local dialect or language. He was schooled at the local synagogue and was able to read the Old Testament Scrolls and knew them well.

 By the time Peter or Simon son of John (Simon Bar-Jonah) in the Hebrew was in his early 30's he had moved to Capernaum. It is located on the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee, west of the Jordan River. His home in Capernaum became Jesus' headquarters for ministry. Folks try to imagine what it would be like to have your homes become the headquarters of a revolution that changes the world forever. Not just any revolution either. A spiritual revolution that brings about unprecedented changes into your home, your community and notoriety. Now that you have a vague grasp on that add this to it. Everyone in the town and local region who is sick, spiritually oppressed or possessed is now at your door trying to get into your home which has also become an auditorium, daycare center, hotel, hospital, and warehouse as the ministry headquarters. Besides, you have had frequent visitors, many of whom were violent foul-mouthed due to their spiritual oppression and possession by demons. For the preaching of the Word of God. The shipment of supplies to go to other parts of the world to aid in the ministry. If that's not enough to strain your marriage and or friendship with your ministry partner's try this one on for size. Imagine Jesus and the twelve returning to your home after being out all day healing the sick, preaching the Word of God only to have the crowds follow him and your husband home to your home along with 11 of his closest buddies. Now Imagine hearing at the end of the business day a loud ruckus outside your door of demon-possessed people demanding to see Jesus. The ruckus gets louder as other sick people come seeking Jesus to be healed of their various illnesses. But wait the noise gets louder and closer. Now there is an obnoxiously loud noise directly over your head. But Why? Because someone or several someones are cutting a hole in your roof. For what? Well, to lower a paralyzed man into your living room expressly for the purpose of having Jesus heal the man. Jesus does, by the way. Jesus sends the man out your front door along with his bed; he has been laying on for decades. Only to be criticized by the Pharisees and other religious leaders.

 These are a few of the things Peter his family are known to have done for the first-century church. The Catholics consider him the first Pope and rightfully so since Jesus named him as his direct successor in the earthly ministry of Jesus Kingdom.

Peter was nailed upside down to a roman cross for his part in the revolution we now call Christianity. He considered it a privilege to die for his faith in this manner. So tonight, as you examine your respective faith walks with Jesus. He asks you, have you made your home an auditorium, daycare center, hotel, hospital, or warehouse as the local ministry headquarters? Have you had frequent visitors, many of whom were violent and foul-mouthed due to their spiritual oppression and possession by demons? For the preaching of the Word of God. The shipment of supplies to go to other parts of the world to aid in the ministry? If not, what can you still do to support the spread of the gospel that you are not already doing? Peter and his family have given us a great example to follow. Is there something additional you can do to support Lutheran Pastors and District Presidents that you are not already doing? Is there something extra the congregation can do to help Lutheran Pastors and District Presidents that we are not already doing? Or put another way, are you willing to die for your faith, and would you consider it a privilege to do so?